



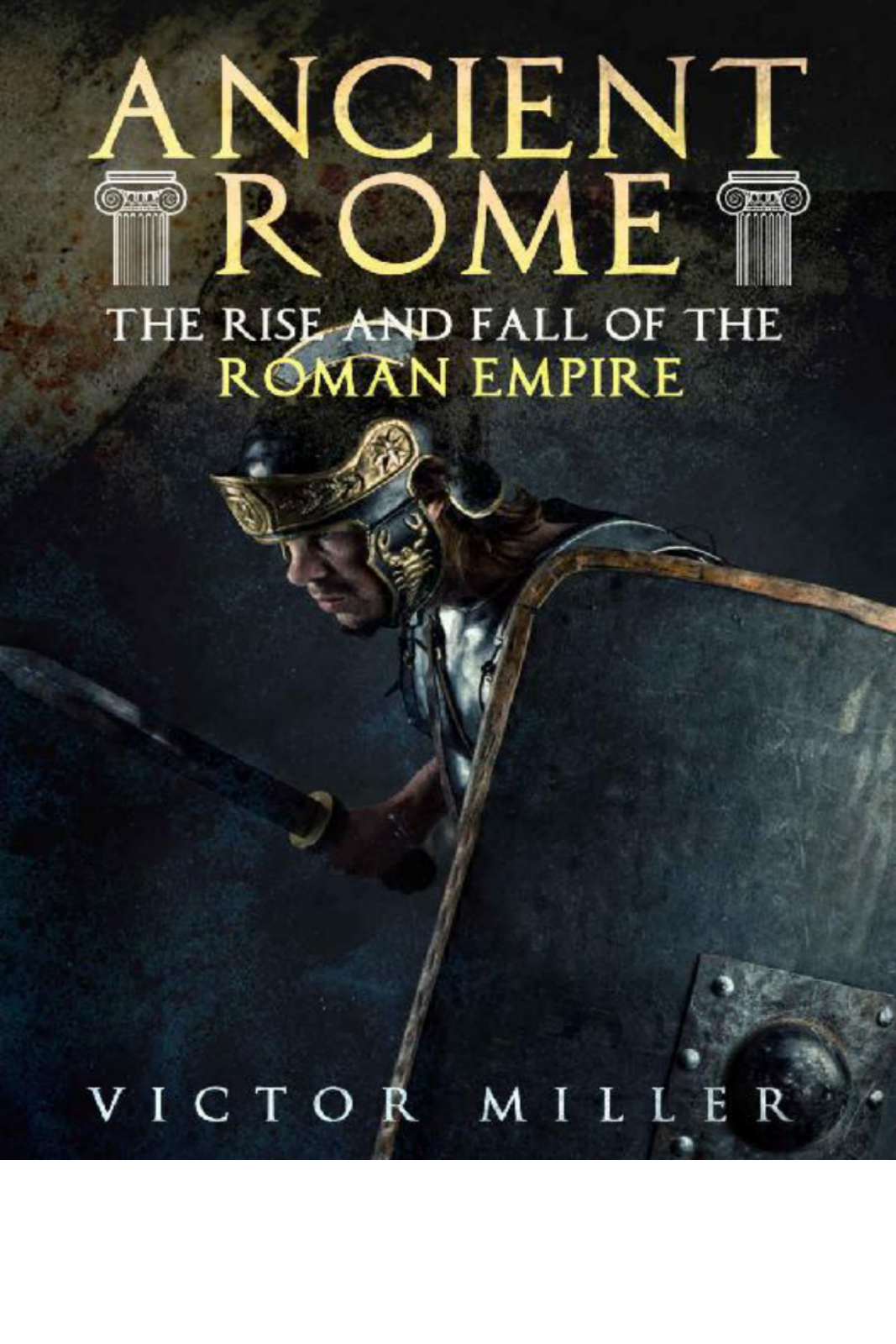
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ANCIENT ROME

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE
ROMAN EMPIRE

VICTOR MILLER



ANCIENT ROME

The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire

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Table of Contents

Introduction

I. Rise of an Empire: The Era of the Roman Peace

- Augustus
- Claudius
- Nero
- Vespasian
- Trajan
- Hadrian
- Marcus Aurelius

II. Rome's Internal Enemies

- An Economy in Decline
- The Colonato
- Corruption
- The Collapse of Trade
- Imperial Poverty
- Internal Fights for Power
- The Rise of Christianity

III. Attacks from Without—The External Enemies of the Empire

- The Origins of the Germanic Invaders
- A Warrior Society?
- First Clashes
- Phases of Invasion
- The "Barbarization" of the Empire
- Enemies of the Asiatic provinces: the Persians
- The Huns

IV. The Fall of the Empire

- Battle of Adrianople
- The Excision of the Empire
- The Sack of Rome
- The Rise of the Visigoths
- Romulus Augustulus: the last emperor

V. The Roman Legacy

- Language
- The Roman Calendar
- Our Legal System
- Geography
- Religion

Conclusion

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Introduction

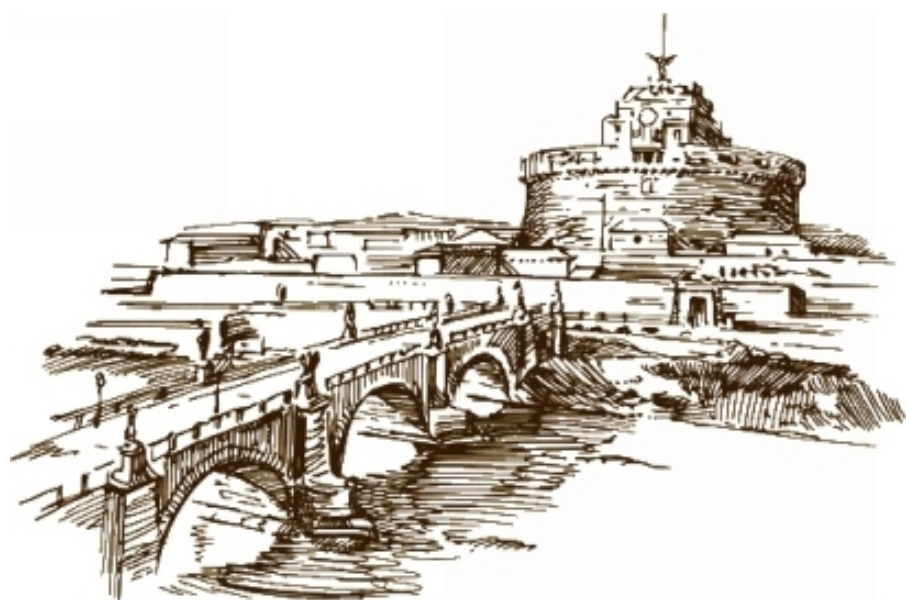
The Rome we left off with at the end of the second book in this trilogy had just transformed into a vast empire. This new Roman Empire was unprecedented in the Western World, encompassing multiple cultures, religions, and peoples under one umbrella. This brought with it much glory; however, many troubles lurked within this model. Over the decades and then centuries, these internal conflicts would work to disturb the careful balance that had sustained the Roman machine until then.

The Roman Empire (27 BC.-476AC.) emerged from a Roman Republic that could not sustain itself. It had grown too large, with too many territories won. External and internal conflicts alike made it impossible for the Republican model to survive. Rome needed a new approach, and it would find it in Empire for a time. Over the centuries, however, this new model would weary under its heavy burdens as well. Threats from the outside and within would slowly eat away at the Empire. Be it due to the Huns and Germanic tribes or the egos of the Roman generals themselves, the Roman Empire would face conflict after conflict. Managing the economy of such a large system would prove difficult as well, not to mention the difficulties of managing an ever-diverse and growing populace.

The conflicts inherent in the Republic would continue to impact the Empire in the long term, however. Despite an extended period of peace at the beginning of the Roman Empire, the same troubles would come to plague the system, slowly chipping away at Roman power and reach. While Rome brought together much of Europe and its surrounding territories, the center could not hold, and internal and external enemies would combine to eventually bring down this giant. Rome would eventually recede, leaving behind it a halved Empire in the East.

The cultural legacy of the Roman Empire would live on for millennia to come, however, still resonating to this day thanks to its rich complexities and innovations. In our systems of government, our language, and even our calendars, we still live with the Roman Empire. Though it is long gone, it has influenced the modern world in

every way possible and bears looking at in great detail. Let's get started.



I

Rise of an Empire: The Era of the Roman Peace



When we left off in the last book, Rome had shaken off the shackles of Caesar and, after a period of transition in the second triumvirate, established Octavian Augustus as Emperor. This launched what would come to be known as the PaxRomana, or "Roman Peace", an era of extended tranquility and prosperity across the Empire. Although there would be bumps along the way, including regional conflict in the East and Emperors that almost brought everything down around them, the PaxRomana would run on for nearly two centuries.

During this extended peace, Rome would have an eccentric array of leaders, running the gamut from intellectuals to debauched (and insane) leaders. Rome would continue to push out and expand, consolidating more territories into the Empire. It would also continue and perfect its campaign of "Romanizing" conquered lands, aiding in its prosperity at first before this model would eventually falter with resistance from conquered peoples. For a time, though, Rome would enjoy unprecedented peace and stability under a series of leaders from 27 B.C. to 180 A.D.

Augustus

During his rule, Augustus would pursue some small campaigns around the borders of Rome, but these were primarily pursued in order to consolidate and protect the outer territories rather than push them out further. Augustus' most remarkable work came in the restructuring of Rome.

After a Republic defined by war and expansion, this transition to peaceful times was at first jarring for Rome. Octavian (who would become Augustus) managed this in large part through coalition, bringing together the most powerful military leaders in Rome into a junta with himself on point as the princeps of Rome. This politically-savvy move managed to eliminate the threat of internal civil war against the empire.

Augustus had to convince the Romans, however, that peace was an acceptable state of affairs. This may seem odd by our reckoning, but to ancient Romans the absence of war meant the absence of opportunities to become even wealthier. Augustus had a hard sell, therefore; he had to convince Romans that they could do as well during peaceful times as during war.

Augustus began a PR campaign of sorts for peace within Rome. He staged elaborate ceremonies and festivals around the closing of the Gates of Janus, a ceremony traditionally done in honor of peace. He also minted Roman coins with the symbol of peace on one side and even hired writers to author extensive homages to this period of peace. Bit by bit, Augustus convinced Rome that it could thrive without conflict, and he established a tone that many emperors of this era would follow for decades to come.

While Augustus established the Pax Romana, this is not to say Rome was entirely without conflict. He used a good bit of muscle to push Rome out into Egypt at large, as well as into Dalmatia, Africa, and Germania. He also completed the takeover of the territories in Hispania, ending a conflict that had long troubled Rome. Perhaps even more remarkably, Augustus also ended the conflict with the Parthian Empire, thanks to his clever politicking and diplomatic instincts.

Around the periphery of Rome, Augustus too created a boundary of client states that served as a buffer between the Empire and the outside world. Finally, Augustus also created the Praetorian Guard, consolidating power for the emperor in this body and allowing the emperor to bypass the senate in his search for power and dominion.

After a long and successful reign, Augustus passed away at the age of 76 in 14 A.D., an ancient age by old Roman standards. While 76 seems a normal age at which to pass away from natural causes in the ancient world, there are some who believe his wife Livia may have had a hand in his demise, poisoning him in order to transfer power to her son, Tiberius. Livia was a powerful woman, who wielded considerable control within the political structure of the Empire. It is said that she acted as counsel to Augustus for decades before becoming more power-hungry and ambitious. Whatever her actions were in Augustus' death, Livia had had a lasting impact on Rome well before that and would continue to do so during the reign of her son.

Augustus' departure from this world was an elegant one worthy of an emperor, in any case. It is said that as his end drew near, he addressed his subjects with the words, "I found Rome in clay; I leave it to you in marble." His words to his friends were less epic but provide a great insight into this first emperor. To them he said, "Have I played the part well? Then applaud me as I exit." In this way, perhaps, Augustus revealed just how deeply he understood the great performance required to be emperor and that Rome would become a vast drama in itself.



Claudius

A few generations later, Claudius would reign as emperor number four from 41 to 54 AD. He would succeed to the throne after his nephew Caligula, a polarizing figure in Roman history. Caligula, it is said, started out well and rational, but eventually devolved into a bitter and vicious tyrant. While these accounts are debatable, what is sure is that Caligula used the Praetorian Guard to consolidate his absolute power, continuing the tradition established by Augustus.

Claudius was a very different creature from the Caligula of popular lore. Claudius, it is said, suffered from a serious physical disability, though accounts of what this disability was differ. Some believe it was polio, while others claim cerebral palsy. What is clear was that his ailment involved physical weakness, shaking, and stammering, but that these symptoms calmed down somewhat when he was not stressed and decreased remarkably once he ascended to the throne. Some believe Claudius' own assertions regarding his ailments, stating that he exaggerated his disability before rising to the throne in order to protect himself from the violence and manipulations of his political family.

Once Claudius came to the throne, he proved to be a great thinker and writer in spite of his physical difficulties. He adopted the name of "Caesar" to confirm him as part of the Julio-Caesarean (or Julia-Claudian) family in the public's eye. As a matter of fact, when Caligula was murdered in 41 AC and Claudius was declared emperor, he was the only alive adult male descendant of the Julia-Claudian family. He was the first emperor established on the throne officially by the Praetorian Guard instead of the Senate, making it very important that he consolidate his power very carefully with the Roman public. He also curried favor with the very Guard that had given him his power, bestowing gifts and bribes upon the Praetorian Guard and even leaving them wealth in his will.

During his reign, Claudius expanded the Roman Empire for the first time, conquering what was left of Britain and securing the borders of the Danube. His conquest of Britain was particularly important. This outpost was a source of great wealth for the Empire and it had too long served as a hiding place for various rebel tribes.

One result of Claudius' expansion of the Empire was that the census leaped up by one million citizens from the last census taken during Augustus' reign. He bestowed blanket citizenship upon conquered peoples but made sure to establish Roman colonies in these places with a local oligarchy that would be sure to disseminate Roman culture to the conquered peoples.

Within Rome itself, Claudius did much to improve the quality of Roman life. He pursued a long list of public works and initiatives, including aqueducts and major roads. He also built a canal to the river Tiber that helped reduce flooding and streamlined trade. It helped ameliorate the grain shortages that had long plagued Rome, too, as did new policies Claudius instigated over sea trade and shipping. Finally, Claudius sought to increase the amount of arable land on the Italian Peninsula, further increasing the food supply for the powerful and growing Empire.

Claudius also did a good amount to promote games within Rome. He is said to have been an enormous fan of public games and established several new events during his reign, leading to the enjoyment of many a Roman but also to the apparent decadence of Rome when viewed from the outside.

Anecdotally, Claudius was also something of a ladies' man, running through several wives and mistresses, it is said. His romantic entanglements were often messy with none perhaps more so than his relationship with one Valeria Messalina. After divorcing his previous wife, Claudius married Messalina, who bore him two children.

Rumor says, however, that despite this domesticity Messalina was in fact a sordid sort. Some legends say she was regularly unfaithful to Claudius and even consorted with prostitutes. At some point, she is said to have married her lover, although the historical record cannot confirm whether this was after divorcing Claudius. Some assume it was an attempt to usurp the throne, though this is also conjecture. Whatever the motivation, this affair resulted in the execution of Messalina, her lover, and their entire circle of friends. Most tellingly, Claudius made the Praetorian Guards promise to execute him if he ever decided to get married again.

Unfortunately for Claudius, the Praetorian Guard did not keep their word. He did in fact marry again, and some believe it was his last wife, Agrippina, who led to his death, poisoning him in the night. His

sad death would end what was for the most part a successful reign and would lead to one of the most polarizing figures in the history of the Roman Empire—Nero.

Nero

Most modern individuals remember Nero as the famous fiddler of Rome, delighting over the destruction of the city by fire while playing his violin. While most likely a fiction, this story encapsulates the image of Nero that existed for many at the time and lives on to this day.

Ironically, Nero spent much of his reign pandering to the common man in attempts to consolidate his power. Unlike his predecessor, he also acceded a good deal of power back to the Senate. During this time, he pursued a role as more of an administrator than anything else, though it was already rumored that he visited brothels on a regular basis. Overall, however, he is said to have been judicious and intelligent at this time, guided by the thoughts of the great Roman thinker, Seneca.

Things took a dramatic turn later in his rule. One dramatic 180 in Nero's life came through his romantic entanglement with one Poppea. Already married to a woman named Octavia, Nero did not believe he could divorce as long as his mother was alive. He decided to murder her, it is said, so that he could more easily divorce his wife and marry his mistress. Some believe he executed his mother because she was plotting treason against him. Whatever the case, to say it was all downhill from here for Nero is an understatement.

Nero banished his first wife, then executed her, before going on to marry Poppea and father two children with her. It is said he killed her when she was pregnant with their second child, though some historical accounts claim she died due to miscarriage. Nero would go on to marry another mistress, whose husband was forced into suicide so that the emperor could take his prize.

During this time of escalating chaos, Nero also began to turn against the senate, leaching the powers he had given them away. He also began excessive pandering to the lower classes, eliminating one tax after another in an attempt to curry their favor.

The crisis point of Nero's reign came in the iconic Great Fire of Rome in 64 AD. Fires were common in the ancient world, but this one was particularly destructive. Some claim Nero started it himself so that he could build a new palace. Nero himself placed the blame firmly on the

early Christians. He initiated a brutal campaign against the religious minority, throwing them to the dogs and crucifying others. This event was critical for starting a campaign of violence and bias against the Christians that would continue for generations.

Nero's reign would continue to spiral out of control, with multiple noblemen conspiring against him. In 65 AD, the Roman statesman Piso organized a rebellion against the emperor in an attempt to save the state from his chaos. The conspiracy was uncovered by those close to Nero before they could pull it off, and all participants were executed. On a sad related note, Seneca himself was ordered to commit suicide for having sat in counsel with the conspirators.

This was the beginning of the end for Nero. Over the next year, Nero would attempt to put down a Jewish revolt in the East in the First Jewish War. This conflict in the East, it is said, actually stemmed from a long-brewing disagreements between the local Greek and Jewish populations. It is said that Greeks sacrificed some birds in front of a Jewish temple, thereby desecrating it. The Roman garrison stationed in the location did nothing to ameliorate the situation, angering the local Jewish population even further. In response, the Jews began to refuse to pay taxes and would no longer make sacrifices to the Emperor at the Temple. The Roman governor ordered a raid of the temple to seize assets he claimed were owed to Rome. The situation quickly escalated from there, with Jewish leaders openly mocking the governor and both sides taking up arms. Judean forces marched against Romans, thus starting the war.

Nero would send his best general, Vespasian, into the East to quell this rebellion after the legate of Syria was unsuccessful in his own efforts to put down the rebels. While Vespasian, would have his successes, the war would not come to an end until 71 A.D. at which point many of the Jews of the region were dispersed into the Diaspora.

With all of these troubles, Nero would eventually be left with no friends and, unable to commit suicide himself, in 68BC, begged his body man to do the task. It is said his last words were "What an artist dies in me"; Nero was certainly a creative and dynamic man, and one who almost toppled the careful balance of the Pax Romana.

The period of time that immediately followed his demise was no less chaotic. The Senate would scramble in the immediate aftermath to consolidate its power, but the chaos established under Nero would continue for the time to come, leading to name that particularly

chaotic time as the year of Four Emperors during which power transferred hands several times. Things would not stabilize for the PaxRomana until finally in 69 AD Vespasian ascended to the throne.

Vespasian

While he would only rule for ten years, the next emperor of note in this early days of Empire would establish the Flavian Dynasty that would remain in control of Rome for three more decades after his rule. Vespasian was a member of an equestrian family that had risen through the ranks during the time of the Julio-Caesarean emperors. He made his name during Nero's reign by leading a successful campaign against the Jews in Judea. He had also been a key figure during Rome's invasion and consolidation of Britain.

He rose to power at the end of the year of Four Emperors. Galba and Otho each ruled for only the briefest periods after the demise of Nero, setting the Roman world of government into chaos. In response, the legions in Roman Egypt declared Vespasian their leader, giving him the might he would need to claim the throne. Knowing well that he would need allies, Vespasian joined forces with Syria's governor, one Mucianus, and the general Primus of Pannonia. He also left his son Titus in Jerusalem to continue commanding his forces there who were still in conflict with Judean forces. While Vespasian moved to claim complete control of Egypt, his allies moved against Vitellius, who had ascended to the throne after the demise of Galba and Otho. After a quick victory, Vespasian was able to claim emperor after the Senate declared him Emperor. Vespasian knew where his real power lay, however, and dated the beginning of his reign to six months later when he turned his legions into the electoral college and used their vote to establish his reign.

His rule would be defined by a combination of brutality against the Jews and Christians along with fiscal austerity that would seek to correct Nero's economy but would further harm the Romans in the end.

Few specifics are known about his rule within Rome, though it is known that he increased taxes on the wealthy and even began charging for use of public latrines. He is known to have started construction on the famous Colosseum as well, one of Rome's greatest living legacies in the modern world, along with the Flavian Amphitheatre. He enacted strict reforms with the Roman army and waged unending campaigns against the Jews in Judea and the Christians within Rome.

While his reign was not a shining light in the history of the Empire, it did stabilize the chaos left in the wake of Nero. After his death, in 79 AC, his son Titus became emperor making him unique in the sense that he was the first Roman Emperor to be succeeded by his own son and not an adopted son from an extended family, and in this way it was formalized the dynastic succession.

Trajan

A few decades later, one of the great Roman Emperors would ascend to the throne. This emperor was Trajan, who had a prosperous reign from 98 to 117 AD.

His rule would be defined as the ultimate reign of a military leader, resulting in the most wide-spreading military expansion in the history of Ancient Rome. While he ruled with a martial hand at Rome's boundaries, within the "walls" of Rome he was a judicious and kind leader, building many public works and improving the social welfare of Romans. All of this earned him the designation "optimus princeps" or "best emperor" along with a place in the collection of the Five Good Emperors who led the Mediterranean to prosperity and growth for years to come. Trajan was the second of the called Five Good Emperors which included Nerva (96AC–98AC), Trajan (98AC–117AC), Hadrian (117AC–138AC), Antoninus Pius (138AC–161AC) and Marcus Aurelius (161AC–180AC).

Trajan's ascent to the throne was unique to the new Empire. He was a member of a non-noble family in Hispania, making him an outsider in the tradition of Old Rome. He was ideal for the new Rome, however, and climbed the social ladder through ability and wile. He established his reputation as a military leader during the reign of Domitian, suppressing a revolt led by Antonius Saturninus against the emperor. When Domitian passed away, the less popular Marcus Nerva took his place. Rome and more importantly the Praetorian Guard never took to Nerva, forcing him to take the popular Trajan under his wing and make him his heir. Trajan succeeded Nerva just a few years later.

Trajan used his power as administrator within Rome to transform the city entirely. He pursued multiple public works, including the construction of Trajan's Forum, Market, and Column. Outside Rome, he accomplished the enormous task of conquering Dacia, a region rich in gold and very useful to the growing Empire. In the East, Trajan pushed Rome all the way into Armenia and Mesopotamia, creating the largest boundary the Empire would ever experience.

He also redefined Rome's relationship with the Greeks in many ways. Navigating the relationships between the high-powered Roman

representatives and the local elite had always been difficult in the provinces. Trajan made a move to get on the good side of the Greek ruling class by reversing many of the financial and logistical punishments that had been meted out to them by the previous emperor in order to keep them in check. He also maintained relationships with prominent Greek thinkers of the time such as Plutarch. In the long run, however, Trajan was keenly aware that too much freedom would let the Greeks claim too much for themselves. He kept them in check with one hand while bestowing favors with the other. He bestowed a large number of seats in the Roman Senate to Greeks for example, angering some Romans who preferred a more homogenized approach to governance, but then also made sure that the *correctores* assigned to oversee the Greeks remained in place and were respected.

After several military victories to the East, Trajan was able to rule peaceably for several years and serve as a more civil-oriented emperor. During this period, he spent a good deal of effort on the buildings and infrastructure of Rome as well as in his native region of Hispania. Within Rome, he built monuments to his Dacian victories along with the forum, his market, and his column. He rebuilt major roads, as well, including the *Via Trajana* and the *Via Trajana Nova*.

For the common folk of Rome, Trajan's rule was notable for the festivals he introduced into the city. He set up the epic, three-day gladiatorial festival that would take place in the Colosseum. While this festival featured feats of skill such as chariot racing, it was a deeply bloody affair and resulted in the deaths of over 11,000 slaves and criminals. It was popular sport for the people of Rome, however, and they showed up in swarms, with as many as 5 million taking part over the entire run of the festival.

On a kinder, more civil note, Trajan also established something known as the "*alimenta*". This served as a welfare program of sorts for the poorest children and orphans in Italia. Not only did the program educate these children, it also provided them with food. Funds for the *alimenta* were drafted from the wealthy owners of the "*fundi*" estates in the countryside. The estate owners received a lump payment from the government and in return were expected to pay into the *alimenta* fund. In this way, Trajan strove to create some economic balance in the deeply divided Rome.

This good and noble emperor reigned successfully for nearly two decades before dying from natural causes on his return to Rome from

the East. He would be succeeded by his adopted son, Hadrian. It has been said that this young heir was probably the lover of Trajan's widow, Plotina, who plotted to force the succession. Hadrian would halt expansion and instead focus on protecting the boundaries of Rome.

Hadrian

Like his "father" before him, Hadrian was an intelligent and objective leader. What he saw around him was a Rome pushed to its limits. While Trajan had succeeded in his campaigns of expansion, Hadrian saw a need to halt any further incursions outward, instead choosing to focus on protecting Rome. He did this in both physical and cultural ways.

Hadrian is perhaps best known for building Britain's famous Hadrian's Wall, which demarcated the northern most boundary of the Empire in Britain. Beyond physical constructions such as this, Hadrian sought to protect Rome by transforming the occupied people of the outer territories. He spent the vast majority of his reign travelling in these distant places, usually in the company of the military. He maintained a "Hellenistic" approach to things, establishing temples throughout Athens and hoping to make it once again the cultural capital of the Mediterranean.

While he withdrew troops from the East and even considered giving up the gold-rich province of Dacia, he did pursue a military campaign in Judaea to suppress yet another Jewish revolt. He renamed the area Syria Palaestina, the vestiges of which we still deal with to this day.

It is said that Hadrian was also a cultured man in spite of his more militaristic nature. From the time of his earliest years, he demonstrated a profound interest in architecture, for one, even going so far as to interject ideas when his predecessor, Trajan, was planning his Forum with his renowned architect Apollodorus. One story says that Apollodorus did not take too kindly to this interference, but Hadrian would have his revenge. Once he ascended to the throne, it is said, he had the legendary architect banished, then killed. How true this is is up for debate, but Hadrian would pursue architectural interests and projects throughout his reign.

Hadrian also pursued interests in poetry, writing in Greek and Latin, and wrote plays in Greek. Interestingly, he also drafted an autobiography, though this was more a bit of political theater, perhaps, than anything else and designed to quell some vicious rumors about him started by political rivals.

As old age approached, Hadrian sought out an heir after the untimely death of his adopted son Lucius Aelius. He eventually settled upon Antonius Pius after Pius promised to pass his reign on eventually to two brothers. This would lead to the unique, co-rule of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus a generation after this bright light in the Five Good Emperors passed away.

Marcus Aurelius

While Marcus Aurelius reigned for half of his rule as a co-emperor with his adopted brother Lucius Verus, his is the name that has stood the test of time. This is in part because of his role as one of Rome's Five Good Emperors, but it is primarily because he was also one of the great thinkers and philosophers of his time. Today, he is remembered oftentimes first as a philosopher and only as emperor as an afterthought. His work "Meditations" is still considered one of the great Stoic works of the era and perfectly encapsulates the Stoic philosophy by framing the values of service and duty through the guidepost of nature and a balanced life.

Aurelius' work outside the realm of philosophy was no less impressive. He defended Rome's borders to the East and West, successfully waging war against the once-again unruly Parthians and protecting Hadrian's holdings in Britain.

While portrayed as a philosopher king in the public mind today, Marcus Aurelius ruled over a Rome ripe and ready for class warfare. Antoninus Pius, his adopted father and the previous emperor, had carefully divided the Roman populace into two categories: the *honestiores* and the *humiliores*. The former were the wealthy class and were absolved from severe punishment under the law. The most savage punishments, including crucifixion, were reserved for the poor *humiliores*. What today is unspoken—that justice is only for the rich—was actually codified in the Rome of Marcus Aurelius.

It is not known to what extent Aurelius leveraged these differences against the weak of Rome, but it is known that this was a period of great persecution of Christians within the Empire. It can be seen from this that, while called a "Good Emperor" along with his father, Marcus Aurelius' legacy was perhaps more complex than the history books would lead us to believe. But then again, history is often written by the victor, as the saying goes. By the way, for historians as Edward Gibbon, the decadence of the Empire started during the rule of Aurelius. Also, it must be said that history has to be analyzed according to parameters of the times in study not the ones in ours times and Manichean handles of facts, in terms of good or evil, has to be avoided, as these contributed to overshadow understanding as it could do it in the mentioned case of "Good Emperor" referred in

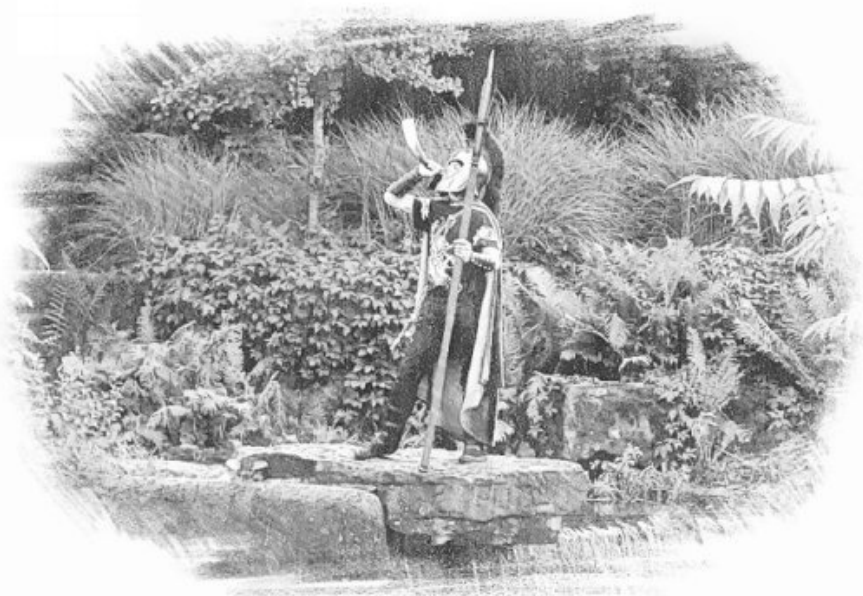
historiography.

II

Rome's Internal Enemies



As with all great entities, Rome was in many ways its own best enemy. Over the course of the Roman Empire, its internal enemies and conflicts would serve to eat away at it bit by bit, leading to its eventual demise. These "enemies" came in many guises, from corruption to the economy to an increasingly diverse populace. Let's look at each factor in turn to get a better idea of how the great Roman Empire eventually failed.



An Economy in Decline

By the time of Hadrian, Rome had stopped growing. Hadrian had done this as a precaution, convinced that the Empire could not sustain any more expansion. This halted growth, however, had sizable consequences on the economy. Without an ever increasing population of conquered peoples and their associated tithes and taxes, Rome was deprived of a significant funnel of income. As a result, Rome had far fewer resources to sustain its large army. The maxim proved true in the Roman Empire—war was good for the economy.

As an attempt to ameliorate this situation, Rome passed the Edict of Caracalla in 212, sometimes referred to as the *Constitutio Antoniniana*. This law bestowed Roman citizenship in full to all free men within the Empire and gave free women the same rights as Roman women, too. This may be viewed as an inclusionary social law drawn to balance a diverse populace, but most historians view it as an attempt to increase tax revenue for the state which in turn could pay for an ever-growing military. The social shifts caused by this law would transform the Empire in the long term, removing the stigma from outsiders and giving them more power.

Key holdings such as Dacia may have cost Rome upfront costs in men and supplies, but they provided enormous returns through natural resources. The outer provinces were also a great source of slaves, supplying the endless free labor the system needed to thrive. When the flow of slaves began to ebb, Rome needed a new economic labor model to fuel its large machine.



The Colonato

The alternative to slave labor would come in the form of the colonato. This system would set the precedent for the feudal system of vassals which would so dominate Europe for centuries to come. Under this labor model, large estates were subdivided into small parcels for tenant farmers. These tenant farmers were given the basic supplies they needed to farm and control of their land; in return, they had to pay enormous taxes to the estate holder. Thus the estate holders got all the benefits of what was essentially free labor and were paid to boot. For many of the poor inside the cities, this was the only alternative, and thousands poured out of the city into this new rural economy.

This colonato system escalated quickly, giving more and more wealth to the land owners. Eventually, the Roman tax collectors could not even make demands upon this wealthy class, further depriving the Roman economy of a key funnel of tax revenue.

Corruption

As with all great bureaucracies, corruption soon enough became a significant problem for Rome, especially after the Diocletian reforms were instated. These reforms took a divide and conquer approach to the Empire, seeking to make it a more manageable realm. What they, in fact, did was make Rome an even more complex (and corruptible) bureaucracy.

Diocletian's first major step was to divide the Empire into four quadrants—a Tetrarchy. The model would involve two Augusti ruling as the primary "emperors" in the East and West sections of the Empire. Ruling just beneath each of these Augusti would be a Caesar who would help manage each half of the Empire. The two men appointed to the Augusti posts were Constantinus in the East and Galerius in the West.

The provinces were also broken down into smaller parcels in an attempt to dilute the powers of the regional governors. A collection of thirteen diocese were created to help oversee the provinces. Each of these diocese had a vicarius at its helm, an administrator who in turn reported to a Praetorian prefect in the service of one of the Tetrarchs.

Diocletian tackled financial reforms as well. Prior to these changes, the silver coinage of Rome had been so profoundly devalued that it had taken a precipitous plunge and put the entire economy in peril. In response to this and mitigating economic factors, Diocletian enacted his Edictum De Pretiis Rerum Venalium. This edict created price limits that sought to eliminate the rampant speculation that was happening across the Roman trade network.

What the Diocletian reforms managed to do was greatly increase the Roman bureaucracy, thereby greatly increasing opportunities for corruption. By some accounts, the bureaucracy doubled due to the reforms, resulting in one bureaucrat for every 5000 citizens under some estimates.

Diocletian reforms also had a huge impact in the provinces and their governance, leading to even more corruption. The reforms reduced the power of the regional governors to a large extent, transferring much of their authority to militarized dukes who oversaw two or even three

provinces at a time. While this was done with the ambition of lessening the power of this political class; however, what it ended up doing is giving more power to the landed gentry. The governors no longer had any real authority over the great ruling class of the colonato, proto-feudal system and could no longer demand taxes efficiently. In turn, the estate owners pursued whatever political agenda they wanted or their money could buy.

The Collapse of Trade

In addition to the economic impact of the colonato system, Rome also suffered under hyperinflation and years of devalued currency. This downward spiral began as the army grew. Emperors in need of buoying the army (and thus protecting their reign) raised the funds for an expanding army by inflating Roman coinage in the extreme through the debasing of the coins with cheaper metals such as copper and bronze.

Understandably, this caused a significant uptick in prices. By the time Diocletian initiated his reforms, the Roman monetary system was near failure. By the end of the third century AD, the time of the Crisis that would ultimately lead to the demise of Rome, the silver denari had practically no value. All trade was limited to retail coinage, giving the economy no true, trackable value.

All this, of course, significantly impacted the trade network that had fed the vast Roman Empire. The Empire depended on trade executed from one Mediterranean port to the next and across the many roads built across Rome's territories. These roads had stood tradesmen in good stead for years, providing brisk travel from one end of the Empire to the other. Rare goods from Syria were just as accessible along these roads as a product of Spain. This diverse network was one of the most thriving and complex economic systems ever in the world, and it would not be rivaled until the modern economic system came into place in the last few centuries.

The debased currency made trade and exchange across this vast network a complete nightmare by the onset of the Third Century Crisis. The civil unrest at various points along these routes also made it impossible for trade to travel safely or consistently. Large estate owners turned to subsistence farming and local trade. These estates also began manufacturing their own goods, unable to rely on goods sent in from major metropolitan centers around the Empire.

In this way, the Roman economy was not only devalued but now decentralized as well. Large estates became independent fiefdoms, feeding nothing to the greater good. This new economic model would set the precedent for Europe for years to come, condemning the region to the manorial economy that would dominate for centuries. All of

this became a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts; as urban poor and tradespeople had fewer opportunities, they had to turn more and more to the landed gentry, giving these oligarchs even more power and wealth. These working poor also surrendered more and more independence and rights as Roman citizens, leading to further destabilization in Roman culture and more class warfare.

This decentralized Roman economy shifted much of the balance of power eastward towards Asia Minor. Diocletian, never a fool, chose Nicomedia as his headquarters and only placed his second in command on the Italian Peninsula. This shift would become an omen of what was to come when the East would rise as the supreme power as the Western Roman Empire fell into disrepair.

Imperial Poverty

All of this put undue pressure on the Emperor's holdings and, as an extension of that, the army. What's more, the Emperor now had the responsibility of walling in the separate city-style fiefdoms around the empire at exorbitant cost. The outer provinces and the landed gentry felt none of the old fear of Rome and did what they pleased by and large, which often included not paying any taxes to the Roman coffers. As the decentralized economy had pushed Roman power toward the East on the macro level, Roman power was also shifting from Rome and other civil centers toward rural estates. All of this was a death knell for the Roman Empire financially, but it also set Europe as a whole on a path of economic destruction that would last well into the middle ages and enslave the common man to the wealthy landlords of the estates.



Internal Fights for Power

As always, the individuals in power in Rome continued to struggle against one another for more power. What complicated this situation even more during this period was just how much power the military had. Since the early days of Empire, various emperors had bestowed more and more political power onto the military.

Things came to a head in the first half of the third century AD when the Emperor Alexander Severus' own troops killed him. They found him weak, as he had sought diplomacy and appeasement with the warring Germanic tribes in lieu of outright battle. In the wake of this assassination, Roman generals fought over who would rule the Empire. While these leaders wasted their time at these power plays, the Germanic tribes continued their forays and raids into the outer Empire, further weakening Rome as a whole and terrorizing the populace. Rather than running Rome, these men left it to be bitten at the edges.

Various generals won the throne of the Empire for a time, including one Aemillianus. As the leader of the Mesian troops of Rome, he won a great victory against the raiding Goth tribe. His army rewarded him by proclaiming him Emperor. Buoyed by this support, this pretender to the throne marched to Rome where he deposed the reigning Emperor Trebonianus Gallus. This treachery would turn on him, however; when a second general, the great Valerian, proclaimed that he was the rightful ruler of Rome, Aemillianus' own troops turned on him and killed him, giving Valerian the throne.

The Rise of Christianity

Just after the Roman Empire was established, a once-in-a-millennia figure rose in the East. Jesus of Nazareth, born in what was then Roman Judaea, would start as a social activist, evolve into a cult leader, and eventually turn into the leading figure in one of the most powerful religions in the world. This religion would take over the Roman Empire itself three centuries after the man's death and would be established in 380 AD as the official religion of an Empire that had always encouraged religious tolerance and diversity.

In many ways, the transition to a Christian Empire was inevitable as trust in the Emperor and the Empire as a power eroded through the years. In the beginning, however, it was easy for the powers-that-be to fend off and even abuse the Christians. They were, after all, a ragtag assemblage of cultists at first, dismissed by many for their intense devotion and odd theology. It was easy to alienate them in Roman society; Christians were neither pagans nor occultists, and no one could quite understand them or pin them down.

As we have discussed, there were various, smaller campaigns of persecution against the Christians throughout the history of the Empire. The first two centuries of the Empire saw small campaigns on a local level, such as the violent purges at Bithynia Pontus, Smyrna, and Carthage. These were always just regional problems, however, and the Empire did not see Christianity as a systemic threat until the third century.

The third century brought with it a very different Christianity and a very different Empire, as well. Christians were no longer just the random eccentric on the street; they were men of power and even wealth. As such, they offered a much more significant threat against the powers that be. Wielding power was also high stakes for the Emperors of this age, as the Empire began to collapse around them and the people of the outer provinces began to think and act independently.

These factors created a perfect storm and led to what is now known as the Great Persecution of Christians. Ironically, in the period just before this during the reign of Gallienus, Christians had experienced an extended period of peace with no persecution. Rome was too busy

dealing with the collapsing economy and the new transfers of power across the Empire. All this would change under Diocletian.

By 303, Diocletian had divided the Empire into the Tetrarchy, separated Rome into four territories with a different emperor each. All four of these emperors released edicts declaring that Christians had no legal rights and that they had to comply with Roman religious practices. More edicts would follow, demanding that Christians sacrifice to Roman gods and targeting the clergy of the faith. Opposing these edicts resulted in imprisonment and even execution. Diocletian would also move to remove all Christians from the army's ranks and sentenced the Manicheans to death

What inspired this persecution? Was it simply that the Christians were growing in number? Rome consisted of many different faiths and cults, after all. The differentiating factor with the Christians, one could say, was that they were simply not the kind of subjects that the Roman Empire wanted and needed. The pagan religions fed into the polytheism of Rome; the Christians were exclusive and monotheistic. Moreover, they had not only one God in the Heavens to and for whom they gave their lives over the many Romans gods, this God was also their only "King", superseding the Emperor and Roma itself.

How these policies manifested varied from one end of the empire to the other. Persecutions were most consistent and violent in the East, no surprise considering that the religion had risen out of this region. This would change, however, after the accession of one of the most important figures in Christian History, Constantine.

Constantine rose to power in the Eastern province in 306 and immediately restored full citizenship to Christians in his lands, even returning confiscated property to them. This started a trend soon followed by leaders across the rest of the Tetrarchy. In 313 AD, Constantine and his fellow Tetrarch, Licinius, established the Edict of Milan, effectively legislating the acceptance of Christians in their sections of the Empire.

All of this snowballed as economic power transferred toward the East. By the 320's Constantine was essentially the supreme leader of the Empire. What's more, he preferred Christianity. It was only a matter of time for Christianity from this point on. Constantine called together the Council of Nicea in 325 in an attempt to create a single orthodoxy for the entire Empire. In 380 AD, Theodosius, Valentinian II, and Gratian jointly declared the Edict of Thessalonika, establishing

Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire. This one-time cult had become the most popular belief system in the entire land.



III

Attacks from Without—The External Enemies of the Empire



Perhaps if Rome had only been besieged from inside, it may have survived. The truth was that it had just as many threats coming at it from the outside world as from inside the Empire, pushing it irretrievably toward demise. No outside threat was greater to the sanctity of the Empire than that of the Germanic tribes and, to a lesser extent, various other tribes such as the Huns.

Since the days of Hadrian, Rome had taken a defensive posture. No longer on the offense and expanding into regions beyond its borders, Rome focused on protecting its boundaries and existing lands. This allowed countless dangerous enemies to foment and grow in power just beyond Rome's borders.

In the third century AD, a series of migrations and invasions began from the tribes of the north that would change the Roman Empire for good. These movements would go on for over four centuries, changing Europe long after the demise of the Roman Empire itself. These tribes would fight one another, fight Rome, and ultimately redefine the culture and mix of the entire continent.

The Origins of the Germanic Invaders

The invaders are often characterized as one mass, a faceless horde without distinction, but in truth, the "barbarians" were several distinct tribes sourced from various points across the north and Scandinavia.

The Germanic peoples as a whole first migrated from the southern tips of Scandinavia and Germany, moving into the area between the Elbe and Oder rivers around 1000 BC. By the year 200 BC, a wave of these migrants had also extended to the west and south, coming into conflict with the Celts and pushing them out toward the Rhine before moving into the south of Germany. By 100 BC, these migration patterns had taken the tribes into Roman Gaul and Cisalpine Gaul where they faced off famously with Caesar in the decades before the Empire.

A second wave of migrants took several Germanic tribes across northern Europe to the east near the Baltic Sea then up toward the Carpathians. These tribes today are all but unknown as they eventually united via military alliance and marriage to blend into the tribes we remember to this day, including, the Franks and Saxons.

A Warrior Society?

The modern perception of these Germanic tribes is that they were a crazed society of warriors, but in truth they were as evolved as any culture of the time in many ways. Goth tribes made jewelry and were skilled seamen and agriculturalists. They had no class structure as compared to a heavily stratified place such as Rome, perhaps making it easier to characterize them as "barbarian". The truth of this social characteristic is that there were few neglected poor in a Goth society. Some historians of the time even report that Romans living in Goth territories fared better than under the Roman system.

The Germanic hordes did famously wear hides, even well after interacting with Romans, perhaps accentuating their image as "wild" people. In terms of religion, they were by and large pagan before adopting the Arian version of Christianity in the third century AD, after a particularly industrious Gothic bishop translated the existing Christian texts into their language.



First Clashes

The first clashes between the Germanic tribes and Rome occurred as early as the end of the 2nd century B.C. The Roman Consul Gaius Marius faced off against tribes in Hispania, Gaul, and even Italy itself during this time. These conflicts were so threatening that Julius Caesar himself used them as his primary reason for annexing Gaul several decades later.

Rome also encountered these tribes as they pushed into the regions around the Rhine and Danube. The relationship between these two entities was more complex in these regions. While there were some military conflicts, by and large the Germanic tribes of these areas began some systems of exchange with Rome, including trade and alliances.

In 101 B.C., the Teutoni and Cimbri tribes drove into the Italian Peninsula from the north. These incursions allowed Caesar and other Roman leaders to begin characterizing the Germanic tribes as a threat that needed constant managing. It was in Caesar's time that the tribal regions of the Rhine and Danube started being referred to as "Germania". Rome now had an enemy with a name. Caesar used this enemy to rally support for the protection of Transalpine Gaul. He would have his successes against the Germanic tribes, but they were tenacious and would continue to impact Rome for generations.

In the first decade after Christ, a revolt surfaced in Germania under the command of the leader Arminius, who until then had been an ally of Rome. He faced off with PubliusQuintilliusVarus at the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest and succeeded in destroying three Roman legions.

These initial conflicts would change the tenor of the relationship between Rome and the tribes irrevocably. Within just a few decades, the Germanic tribes would go from being troublesome to the greatest threat ever faced by the Roman Empire.

Phases of Invasion

Most modern thinkers divide the barbarian migrations into two phases, taking place between 300 and 500 AD and 500 to 700 AD respectively. The first had the majority impact on the Roman Empire and is documented by the historians of Greece and Rome at the time.

One of the first significant incursions came from the Thervingi or 'forest people' and Gothic tribes in 268 AD. These hordes invaded Pannonia and Illyricum coming close to invading the Italian Peninsula itself and the heart of the Empire.

Rome responded with confidence under the guidance of Emperor Gallienus. Rome engaged the enemy at the Battle of Naissus in 269 AD, it is assumed. The losses on both sides were epic, with some estimates placing Goth losses at 50,000 men. Ultimately, Rome won through guile as was their wont and tricked the tribes into an ambush.

A number of the tribes managed to get away, fleeing toward Macedonia. These were pursued mercilessly by the Romans, causing many of them to die of starvation along the way. Rome surrounded the fleeing invaders once again at Mount Haemus where sickness now took many of the Goths. Many once more escaped, but the majority were captured and taken prisoner. As was the Roman way, these prisoners were admitted to the army and offered land parcels as part of the colonato system.

This first, significant victory against the invading hordes was important for Rome. Weakened by the Crisis of the Third Century, the faltering Empire was in need of a great victory. The Goth hordes would regroup however and attack again, forcing Aurelian to surrender the critical, gold-rich region of Dacia in an effort to consolidate the borders of the weakened Empire.

The Thervingi made forays into Rome once more in 376. This incursion was the beginning of the end for Rome, leading to the sack of the great city, which we will look at in greater detail in the next chapter. Rome could not stave off these invading hordes, though they tried multiple approaches including assimilation. With regards to that assimilation, let's take a moment to look at just how Rome tried to "barbarize" its ranks in dealing with these multiple migrations and

invasions.

The "Barbarization" of the Empire

Rome had always been a diverse system of different peoples and, as we have discussed, at length in this trilogy, conquered people were constantly assimilated into social and military ranks. By the time of Hadrian, things had taken a very significant shift, however. It is estimated that only 10 percent of the legions were actually from the Italian Peninsula. By and large, the army consisted of provincial fighters.

This pattern only intensified throughout the third century AD with the coming of the Germanic tribes. Bit by bit, more and more of these "barbarians" were admitted into the ranks or given Roman citizenship and land. Some cite this as damaging the "discipline" of the army, but while these new conscripts may have had a different style, they were often cited as valiant and strong. There was a lack of discipline in terms of how the legions were managed, however; troops were allowed to live outside their official barracks, marrying into the local populace and having families. This inevitably led to more "barbarization" of Rome.

Even, these foreign allies, by historical affairs, could have a weak level of loyalty to Roman Empire. And, as a matter of fact, it had happened, likewhen in the year 9 AC, Arminius, a roman citizen -and military commander- but with Germanic roots, betrayed Roma and led the Roman army to a trap to be massacred in the iconic Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in which many tribes fought together against Romans, as we discussed earlier.

It is important to take a moment to parse the term "barbarian." In the Rome of the late Empire, this word simply meant anyone who did not speak or write Latin. Today, we conflate the term with a lack of civility or culture, but it is important to understand just how widely and loosely Romans tossed about this term.

Interestingly, these so-called barbarians were also taking over the higher ranks and places of power, just as Christians were rising from the masses during this period. By the early third century even the Emperor was a product of the provinces and had no relation to the Italian Peninsula. Hadrian had also included a new section of troops in the legions known as "numeri". These bodies consisted of non-citizen

troops who often wore their own traditional garments and rallied themselves with their own war cries. Rome was becoming less and less "Roman.'

In the East, Constantine was taking a slightly different approach. He too was assimilating conquered barbarians, but he was keeping them close and even setting them up as powerful allies. One such example was the Alamannic king, Chrocus, who Constantine formed an alliance with before he even ascended to the throne. It was Chrocus himself who put Constantine up for Augustus after the death of Constantinus. In later years, Constantine would begin to stigmatize the "barbarians", but these P.R. attempts—including the stamping of propaganda on coins—can be seen as political manipulations and not indicative of an overall shift.

Enemies of the Asiatic provinces: the Persians

Another great threat was brewing against Rome in the East, as well, in the form of the great Persian—or, at the time, "Sasanian"—Empire. This conflict would reach its apex in the Battle of Edessa during which the Emperor himself would be captured. This Persian threat would be one of the greatest dangers to the Empire at the time.

Shapur I was the leader of the Sassanids and a formidable leader he was. He had already led forays deep into Roman lands several times before the Battle of Edessa, taking over Antioch twice in the 250's. When Valerian ascended to the throne after deposing Aemillianus, he marched straight to the East to address matters there. He made headway in stabilizing the East for a time until the Goths began making trouble. The Goths managed a naval invasion in Asia Minor and moved south toward Cappadocia. Occupied by these Germanic threats, Rome was incapable of staving off yet another threat when Shapur and his troops invaded Mesopotamia in 260.

Accounts of the Battle of Edessa vary from one side to the other, as is only natural. The Persian version that has come down to us tells us that Shapur led a complete and quick defeat of Rome during which he captured the Emperor. Rome's version describes a betrayal on Shapur's part. This version states that Rome sued for peace and attempted negotiations after an early defeat but that Shapur betrayed the Emperor and took him prisoner instead, along with several powerful Romans such as a Praetorian prefect. Whatever the truth, the Emperor ended up in enemy hands, a first in the history of the Roman Empire.

Valerian's true fate is confused by the passing years, as well. Some accounts state that he and his men were treated well by the Persians. Others claim shocking tales of abuse, the most memorable of which is that the Persian Emperor used Valerian as a stepping stool to ascend to his throne. Whatever the truth, this defeat was a shocking and game-changing one for the Empire and a sign that the Empire was waning.

The Huns

It is important to take a moment to address one of the other 'hordes' of Europe at the time—the Huns. The Huns are significant in the Roman narrative not because they came into conflict with the Roman Empire but because it was their presence that likely inspired the Great Migration of Germanic tribes down into the Empire.

The Huns began in the Caucasus near the Caspian, but during their short-lived "empire" held dominion over much of the barbarian lands of the North and East. They were noted for their skills as horsemen and archers, and their most famous leader, Attila, unified them for a time as a single empire.

Rome knew little of this growing tribe, however. They only realized that they existed once the Hun incursions against the Goths of the Pontic Steppes drove thousands of Goths into the Empire as refugees. The Huns also moved against the Alans around this time and pursued a general policy of attack and plunder throughout the Germanic tribes.

The Huns became a significant threat against the Empire in the East after Attila and his brother Bleda took over the tribe. Their incursions against the Eastern Empire in the early 400s forced the East to sign the Treaty of Magus, which forced Rome to pay tribute to the Huns. When the Huns broke the treaty, Rome stopped paying tribute and the Huns re-escalated their raids against the Eastern Roman Empire. The Huns would maintain civil diplomatic relationships with Western Rome during this time, perhaps aware of the true reach and limits of their own empire.

While not directly a part of the barbarian invasions that nicked away at the Roman Empire, the Huns played a very significant role in the eventual demise of the Roman system. The forced influx of Goths into Rome and the failed Romanization of these parties would lead to some of the worst conflicts between the hordes and Rome and bring down the Western Empire.

IV

The Fall of the Empire



As we have discussed, the fall of the Roman Empire was a "death by a thousand cuts" and did not happen suddenly or all at once. There are a few seminal events, however, that sounded as death knells for the Empire, including the excision of the Empire, the Battle of Adrianople, and the sack of Rome, all of which built toward the final moment for the Empire when an Eastern Goth turned Roman would declare himself king of the Italian Peninsula and effectively bring the Roman Empire to a close.

Battle of Adrianople

After the influx of the Huns into Germanic areas as we have discussed, the Goths sought refuge in the Eastern Roman Empire. The Eastern Roman emperor at the time, Valens, let these people settle in the Empire as *foederati*, assigning them the status of barbarian mercenaries. They could have a place in the Empire, but they would have to fight. This was a smart use of the Germanic instinct for war, if it had been applied constructively.

The disarray in governance of the outer provinces, however, resulted in many of these relocated Goths being treated quite badly within the walls of the Empire. The provincial commanders lied, cheated, and stole when it came to the Roman Goths, causing them to rebel. Faced with a powerful revolt within his own lands, Valens turned to the Western emperor, Gratian, for help. Gratian supplied the East with sizable reinforcements and a two-year series of small battles between the Goths and Rome ensued.

While able to stave off a greater revolt, Rome was not able to stamp out the Goth rebellion entirely. Impatient with Rome's lack of progress, Valens took the helm at the Roman side of the conflict, conscripting further reinforcements from Syria and calling for Gratian's legions from Gaul. He gathered with this new, larger army at Constantinople, which had become the capital of the Empire since 330AD, while his second, Sebastianus, gathered with his legionaries at Adrianople.

Sebastianus had some early success against the Goths, making Valens, in his turn, hungry for battle. He marched his army toward Adrianople to meet up with Sebastianus' forces and deal a final blow to the Goths. Meanwhile, the Goths marched 10,000 toward the site under the command of Fritigern.

In a huge misstep, Valens decided to jump into battle without waiting for any further reinforcements from the West. His thirst for glory had gotten the better of him. Seeing the large force on the Roman side, Fritigern sent an envoy of peace, but Valens doubled down, rejecting the offer and determining to go to battle. He believed he had the greater numbers on the field, but he was unaware of the fact that a large number of Goths were nearby foraging.

On August 9, Valens marched his troops toward the Gothic holding on the north side of the city. It was difficult terrain with the Goth camp set on high, and the Roman army arrived tired and dehydrated. Frigern knew he had only to wait for the Gothic cavalry to return from their foraging, so he distracted the Romans by setting fire to the fields and starting negotiations over the exchange of hostages. The Romans were completely befuddled by this, still unaware of the coming cavalry on the Gothic side and overly confident in their numbers.

It is said that a handful of Roman units started the battle without any call to battle from command. The Iberian prince Bacurius and his archers attacked but had no rear support and had to retreat. Simultaneously, the left-wing battalions reached the Goth stronghold, but this move timed their arrival exactly with the return of the Gothic cavalry. The Goths drove the Romans back to the base of the hill where they routed the Roman forces.

It was an all-out, bloody massacre. Even Valens himself was left abandoned by his deserting legions and cavalry. Some believe that the emperor died on the field, as an unknown soldier. Others hold that he made his escape to a nearby cottage. When Goths arrived to pillage the village where the cottage was located, they set the cottage on fire with burning arrows, unaware of the valuable potential hostage inside. Valens, it is said, burned to the ground with this humble abode. Some Romans put up a last stand outside the walls of the city, but were summarily defeated.

The consequences of the Roman defeat at Adrianople were immense. The barbarians were now significant enemies and no longer a fragile populace that could be wooed into submission as mercenaries or with the promise of land. Moving forward, Rome would continue to work with the Goths as *foederati*, but all hope of true confederation were lost. Some believe the battle resulted in the complete restructuring of the Roman army and its approach to warfare as well, turning more attention to cavalry and even presaging the advent of the medieval knight. Whatever the longterm impact, the short term effect did not bring down the Empire, it was a significant chink in its armor and a harbinger of what was to come.

The Excision of the Empire

Many times during the Empire, Rome had attempted to make it easier to run the vast kingdom by splitting administrative duties across various sections of the Empire. A prime example of course was the Tetrarchy during which four separate "rulers" administered separate regions. The emperor, however, was never split during any of these times; in fact, it was impossible to conceive of... until it did happen.

In some ways, Theodosius I can be seen as the last emperor of the Roman Empire in that he was the last emperor to ever rule over a united empire. From the end of his rule onward, the Roman Empire would be permanently excised into a Western Empire and an Eastern one.

Theodosius enacted many impactful changes during his reign, not the least of which was to establish Nicene Christianity as the faith of the Empire and ban pagan ritual such as the Vestal Virgins and even the Olympic Games.

This newfound role for Christianity was one of the factors that facilitated cleaving the realm in two. It was a time of great discussion over what was truly orthodox in terms of the religion; these lines ended up falling naturally between Western and Eastern territories of the Empire.

The East and West were also having very different experiences financially and with the barbarian hordes as discussed. All of this made the time ripe to create two Romes in lieu of just splitting administrative duties. Upon his death in 395, Theodosius split the Empire irretrievably between his two sons. Neither was yet fit to reign and their thrones were overseen by two regents, leading to weak governance and general chaos. It set the precedent for what was to come.

The Sack of Rome

One unique figure in the history of Rome rose to power during this time. His name was Stilicho, and he was distinct for being half Vandal. His ascension to power was the first time a "half barbarian" had risen so high in the ranks. He would go on to marry the niece of Theodosius and serve as regent for Honorius after the excision of the empire.

While a savvy politician, Stilicho was first and foremost a soldier. His father had been a Vandal soldier for the Romans while his mother was Roman and he had been brought up in the military tradition. As he rose through the military ranks he caught the eye of Theodosius, who very cannily realized that a Vandal ally would be a smart ally given the circumstances with the barbarians. Stilicho became his righthand man and was trusted with the rule of the Western Empire when Theodosius' son Honorius ascended to the throne there, while his brother Arcadius ruled with a regent in the East. That regent, incidentally, happened to be Stilicho's long-time rival, Rufinus, making intrigue between the two courts that much more complex.

The Rise of the Visigoths

The sack of Rome stemmed directly from the election of a Visigoth king, one Alaric. The Visigoths, or "Goths of the West", had long been problematic for the Western Empire. With the ascension of Alaric, Stilicho and Western Rome knew they had to execute a quick response, especially after Alaric broke the peace treaty that existed between the two powers and led a raid against Roman holdings in Thrace.

Rufinus out in the Eastern Empire was busy managing endless raids by the Huns against Roman holdings in the region. As such, he could not spare troops to help fend off the Visigoths in the West. Instead, he sought to negotiate with Alaric in person, a move which made the powers that be in the Eastern court suspicious of Rufinus and his choices. Stilicho was left to march eastward against the Visigoths on his own. On the precipice of victory, however, Arcadius ordered Stilicho to withdraw, perhaps motivated by the intrigue spinning at court. Within a short time of this withdrawal, Rufinus was murdered by his own soldiers, leaving the young Arcadius to rule alone.

Stilicho plowed forward in his war against the Visigoths undeterred. He marched against them once again in Macedonia, winning a great victory but failing to capture the wily Alaric. There are many reasons Alaric might have slipped through Rome's fingers. Some allege decadence and partying on Stilicho's side, while others cite the fact that Arcadius always resented Western troops in his lands and may have asked Stilicho to retreat once again, suspecting Stilicho had an eye on the region.

One possible factor was a revolt in North Africa led by a Roman general named Gildo. Gildo wanted to usurp the Roman territories in Africa to the Eastern side of the Empire, thus depriving the West of an important supply of grain. Stilicho was thus momentarily distracted and turned his attention to Africa, sending Gildo's own brother to face him in battle. Rome was victorious and Stilicho's power only increased as he was appointed consul.

Stilicho would continue his campaigns against Alaric and his Visigoths for years to come eventually coming to an uneasy truce. Alaric retreated back to Illyricum. Stilicho saw this as an opportunity to

make an unholy alliance with the Visigoth king and retake Illyricum for the West. Before he could ally with Alaric in this plan, however, a coalition of barbarians in the West invaded the Italian Peninsula. Stilicho had to rush to rally enough troops to face this threat, even going so far as to enroll slaves in the army. After some desperate scrambling, Stilicho was able to defeat the invaders.

In 406, Stilicho was able to return his attention to Illyricum. He demanded that the powers at the Eastern capital, Constantinople, return control of East Illyricum to the Western Empire, which had been transferred administratively to the East by Theodosius. It is likely that Stilicho wanted these lands to use as a key vantage point from which to run raids in alliance with Alaric against the Germanic tribes. The East refused.

As a result, in the end of 406 the coalition of Germanic tribes crossed the frozen Rhine to assault the lands of Roman Gaul. In response, a series of military revolts started across the region as well as in Britannia, permanently scarring Stilicho's reputation as a leader. Constantine III in Britain saw this as his opportunity and led his own rebellion. Stilichus' second, Sarcus, had some success against Constantine III but eventually had to retreat, leaving Stilichus to block off the Alps in a desperate attempt to halt invasion of the Italian Peninsula.

After these events, Alaric broke off his alliance with Stilicho and demanded that he be paid for the military services he had already rendered to the Empire. If the Senate did not approve the release of a large amount of gold, he said, he would attack Italy. The Senate at first resisted, but Stilicho convinced them to accede to Alaric's demands. This on top of the Constantine revolt in Britain left Stilicho with few allies in Rome. By the end of 408 he was forced into retirement in Ravenna and then executed along with his son.

The barbarians of the foederati paid a brutal price after the assassination of Stilicho. Romans turned against the families of the allied barbarians, slaughtering them in their homes. Incensed beyond all reason, the Goths came together once again under the protection of Alaric and began a campaign down and into the Italian Peninsula.

By the fall of 408, the hordes stood at the very walls of Rome. This began the long siege of Rome that would lead to the eventual sack of Rome. Alaric and his hordes stood at the walls of Rome four times over the next two years, leaving the people of Rome to isolation and

starvation. Pinned down, Honorius could do nothing but try to wait them out. Several attempts at peace were made, but after Honorius betrayed Alaric and attempted to attack him during a peace entreaty, Alaric decided enough was enough. He returned to Rome and he and the Goths broke through the gates.

In August of 410, the barbarian hordes began their sack of Rome, the first such occupation of the city in eight centuries. This was not just an enormous shift for the Empire itself but a shift for the world at large as well. As St. Jerome wrote, the city that had so long dominated everyone else "was taken itself."

The Goths pillaged Rome for three days, it is said, ransacking buildings, temples, and even mausoleums. All goods that could fetch a price were stolen and stored in the Goth coffers. The Goths did spare the basilicas of Peter and Paul, perhaps out of deference to the Christian faith which they had by and large adopted. Citizens were either captured, raped, and killed or sold into slavery. Even the Romans who managed to escape as refugees to North Africa were sold into slavery by the ruler there, it is said.

Rome as the ancient world had known it for so long was finished.

Romulus Augustulus: the last emperor

The Empire would somehow limp on after the sack of Rome for a time. The Western Empire now maintained an attitude of begrudged alliance with the barbarians, since they had confirmed themselves as worthy adversaries. The emperor who ascended to the throne three decades after the first Sack of Rome even married his daughter to a Vandal king. When the next emperor nullified that marriage, the Vandals decided to execute their own sack of Rome and succeeded in 455. This would be the second of three sacks that would destroy the once Eternal City. It all but destroyed what survived of the Empire, though the stubborn beast that was Rome would manage to carry on for two more decades. That is, until one Odoacer decided he had a different idea for the city and Italy at large.

Little is known about Romulus Augustus' life beyond the fact that his father, Orestes, proclaimed him emperor. His realm was a pale shade of what Rome had once been with imperial authority covering only the Italian Peninsula and small sections of Gaul. The Eastern Empire was still thriving as the Byzantine Empire and viewed the ragtag West as a client state of its vast holdings. The East had its own problems with two generals, Zeno and Basiliscus fighting over the throne. Neither, incidentally, ever acknowledged Romulus as the true ruler of the West.

Amongst this chaos, Odoacer, a Scirian king, decided to move against the holdings of Romulus' father in Italy. When Romulus' father refused to surrender, Odoacer captured and executed the man. He then turned to Ravenna where the young Emperor was seated. It was an easy thing for him to capture the weak city and emperor, and the Scirian king forced the young emperor to abdicate.

While the Western Empire had been on the decline for decades and even centuries, this is largely considered the final death knell of the Empire. The Senate and Odoacer lobbied Zeno in the East to take the West under his wing, stating that the West no longer needed to function as a separate empire. Zeno agreed, codifying the end of the Western Empire and absorbing it into the Byzantine Empire. Odoacer would continue on as the King of Italy, ruling as a representative of the Emperor of the East. The Eastern Empire survived the Western one by near one thousand years.

V

The Roman Legacy



The legacy of Rome is so far-reaching in our society that it almost feels impossible to tally. That legacy has affected our languages, sciences, arts, and even the way we structure our daily lives. While Roman ruins decay elegantly across Europe, the living vestiges of Rome are thriving everywhere we turn. As we wrap up this trilogy and this book, let's look at how Rome continues to impact us to this day.

Language

Latin has influenced a wide array of languages throughout Europe and the Western world. It won out over Greek and Aramaic to become the language of the Empire and, more importantly, became the language of study later during the Middle Ages as the official language of the Catholic Church. While Greek was the intellectual language of the East and studied by many an intellectual, Latin had the dominant effect in the gestalt as the lingua franca of the thinking set during a crucial time in Europe's development.

The Roman language's role as the main form of communication for intellectuals extended well into the Renaissance and Baroque periods, coloring the development of sciences and medicine to an enormous degree. Major works by such legends as Copernicus were written entirely in Latin, and the terms used to define the sciences remained in Latin to this day.

Latin also trickled down into other spoken languages, influencing the development of the Romance languages to an enormous extent and also infiltrating Germanic languages to a degree. This language I'm writing in now, which could be argued as the lingua franca of the modern world, owes almost 50 percent of its words to Latin and shares many grammar parallels with Romance languages such as French. In every word we speak, we are reliving the legacy of Rome.

We also leverage the Roman script in our written word. The Latin script is perhaps the most 'Roman' of all the Empire's vestiges, as it is a unique conglomerate of many traditions that existed within the umbrella of Empire and stemmed from an Etruscan modification of Greek script. While Greek lettering and then Cyrillic would dominate in the East, the simpler lines of the Latin or Roman script would define all the Romance languages and eventually become one of the most dominant scripts in the world.

The Roman Calendar

Perhaps the most significant impact Rome left on the modern world is through its calendar, though it may be the one we take the most for granted. The calendar we use in the majority of the world today is a version of the Julian calendar first established during the Republic under Julius Caesar himself. We can see the Roman influence in our calendar month names, each reflecting a Roman name, god, or concept.

Our days of the week stem from the planetary hours system used by both the Greeks and the Romans and designed around the seven planets known to man at the time. These planets were believed to rule over each day and influence the events of those days. The vibrant diversity of the Roman Empire is also evident in the names of our days, with Thursday serving as a vestige of how the Germanic tribes assimilated into the Empire. "Thursday" after all is "Thor's day", with Thor serving as a Germanic proxy for Rome's Jupiter.

While not as common as Latin script, the numeral system of Rome lives on today as well. We use it in our names, for instance, to demarcate a second or third generation, in clock faces, and in important inscriptions. Those clock faces also reflect the Roman codification of the day into 24-hour segments... and we could measure one of those clocks in the Roman inches and feet that we still use today.

In terms of science and philosophy, much of what still resonates today actually came about in the Hellenistic world and in the East well before the Roman Empire. Rome did create many significant developments in philosophy and science that live on in our modern world. The thoughts of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, for example, are still quoted and referenced in modern thought and life.

The Roman city of Alexandria in Egypt was also home to much scientific development, as executed by scientists from varied backgrounds within the Roman Empire. Ptolemy, for one, pushed astronomy ahead by centuries with his work, while Galen defined much of medical practice to come. Mathematics and the mechanical sciences also thrived within Alexandria and the Roman system via innovators such as Hero and Diophantus, who developed principles

that still exist to this day.

Our Legal System

The modern Western approach to law also reflects Rome's history. While our legal system is much more complex and does not reflect Roman law or philosophy directly, it does still bear a similar structure. For example, the basic of jurisprudence, including trial by judge with a plaintiff and a defendant have all been passed down to us over the millennia from Ancient Rome.

Our governments, too, reflect the ancient glories of Rome. What modern nation does not use a legislative assembly to discuss the leading issues of the day and create laws. Our leaders, too, reflect the model established by the Roman Consul. Important political thinkers in the West, too, were heavily influenced by the political rationales of such great Romans as Cicero or Seneca. Even the models of power that we have cast aside reflect a Roman heritage, with a Czar or Czarina of recent centuries bearing the heritage of "Caesar" in their very names.

Geography

The Roman influence still exists in the very geography that defines our nations' boundaries to this day. Roman regions such as "Hispania" follow many of the same lines as their modern counterparts and even use names derived from the Roman ones ("Spain"). The Italian Peninsula itself as the last bastion of the Roman Empire and defined naturally by the Alps and the sea, remains autonomous to this day as Italy. Rome's influence throughout the Mediterranean is still resonant in the names of various locales, as well, including Syria and Palestine.

Religion

The Christianity of Rome has obviously had long-reaching impact on the world. Many of the vestiges of the Roman approach to governance live on in the Catholic Church. The church, for example, divides its worldwide church into diocese, while the leader of the church is referred to as the Pontifex Maximus. The Catholic Church also still leverages many of the ornamental garments used by Romans in the days of Empire.



Conclusion

Rome lives on, everywhere. This immense Empire which had such an influence on the ancient world still affects us today. As we wrap up our look at Rome, it behooves us to consider just how significant these people and their Empire was. It still resonates in everything from our words to our sense of time, making Ancient Rome a significant component of modern thought and life.

We can also use Rome as an instructional manual of sorts for modern life. It is not hard to see many reflections of the Roman Empire in the world around us today, in both negative and positive ways. The materialism, consumerism, and imperial nature of many world governments provide uncanny perils to the Empire. By learning about the cracks in Rome that brought it down, we can perhaps learn what needs to be done to preserve our modern, global empire.

Rome remains a thing of great interest to us. In its strengths and frailties it benefits not only the historian in us but also the moralist and storyteller.

About the Author

Victor Miller is a 45 year old man living in historic Charleston South Carolina with his wife Jackie and two kids Kevin and Mark. Victor is a lover of history. Growing up he loved to learn about the ancient Romans, Greeks as well as other historical events.

After completing high school he began to see the world. Taking a trip to Egypt to see the pyramids and then off to Rome and the surrounding areas he was able to see the worlds that he loved first hand. After getting married he began to settle down and began to write about his travels. He would be invited by high schools and other institutions of learning to tell his tales and show off artifacts that he has collected to students and staff.

With the development of Amazon and their publishing platforms Victor has been able to share his writings and love of history with the world. As of 2015 he plans on writing many more stories from his adventures and wealth of knowledge.



I hope this book was able to help you understand and admire the true story of the Rise and the Fall of the Roman Empire.

Finally, if you enjoyed it, then I'd like to ask you for a favor, would you be kind enough to leave a review for this book on Amazon? It'd be greatly appreciated!

Thank you again and good luck!